

TV Dinner, Rochester

TV Dinner by Judy Greene, 1990

Programs in 1996-1997

Program Brochure undated

TV Dinner. Food for Thought is a monthly public affairs program that airs on public access channels in Rochester and the surrounding suburbs. The show was created by members of Metro-Act, a multi-issue group with a history of involvement in media issues, in order to promote public participation, creative programming and democratic media in an era of deregulation/monopolization, commercialism and corporate media.

TV Dinner began three years ago. A number of people who had taken video classes at Visual Studies Workshop, or Portable Channel, or through Greater Rochester Cablevision's public access program got together in November of 1986 to plan the show; and TV Dinner started airing in February of 1987. Each show focuses on an area of public concern such as reproductive rights, labor issues, health care, local responses to foreign policy issues, education, or the environment; and we produce most of the content of each show. We have generally had about 7 or 8 people involved as producers; and responsibility for directing, producing and editing each show is rotated among the group. All but one of us are volunteers; in January, 1989, funding from NYSCA allowed us to hire a part time staff person. Other grants from a local foundation and local unions have allowed us to buy some basic equipment including a camera. Since the show began, we have received essential support from the Media Access Program at the Visual Studies Workshop, where we have done most of the post-production for the show.

In addition to producing shows, the TV Dinner producers have promoted the use of public access in Rochester. We have encouraged and trained new producers. And because the local cable company does nothing to promote public access, we produced a program about what public access is, to let people know that they can make their own television. During the current franchise negotiations between the city and the cable company, we have tried to educate legislators and city officials about public access and advocate changes that would actively promote and sustain public access in Rochester.

Our decision to get involved in the medium of television has been supported by the conjuncture of several developments both technological and political. Some of these include the development of small format video camcorders and editing systems and the existence of public access legislation and media access facilities. But perhaps the most important is the effect on the media of political changes made during the Reagan presidency.

Locally, because of the deregulation that occurred under Reagan, the communication media's mandate to be socially responsible has been weakened. In the late 60's and 70's, Metro-Act members were able to challenge the licenses of local television and radio stations because of biased coverage of racial issues and insufficient coverage of urban issues. These challenges led to FCC hearings that resulted in increased hiring and promotion of women and minorities and more news and public affairs programming. Deregulation has resulted in the loss of much of that local public affairs programming. As a result, we see a definite need to provide a wide range of information and critical views on a broad selection of public concerns in Rochester.

In addition to producing our own material, we are also interested in airing the work of other independents in the area and we would like to exchange shows or segments of shows with other producers or public access programs on an informal basis.

Programs in 1996-1997

TV Dinner offered a number of workshops and training programs which promoted the need for a diversity of perspectives in media, and encouraged people to actively participate by producing programming for public access. Beginning about 1990 Ruth Cowing and Nancy Rosin began to conduct video training workshops and has provided services to over 21 community groups. TVD began offering instruction in the Internet in 1996. TVD was also actively involved on the planning committee for the Media Posse's Upstate Media Festival, 1996. They helped organize a panel on "Cross Media Coalition Building", with Mona Jimenez (Media Alliance), Anne Sundberg (Wiring Youth in Rensselaer Everyday), Jamie McClellan (Libraries for the Future), Carlos Santana (Spanish Action Coalition), and Funmilayo Makarah (artist). TVD also expands the audience for documentary media work by sponsoring screenings.

TV Dinner Program Brochure

TV DINNER is a monthly community access program that offers an alternative to the steady diet of junk food on network and cable television. TV DINNER is:

TELEVISION FOR ALL COMMUNITIES: The Police Review Commission. National health care. Abortion rights. Labor solidarity. AIDS/HIV. We've been producing news and views from a progressive standpoint since 1987.

"Whenever we called upon TV DIAWER to be present at a rally or a demonstration regarding Civilian Review, you were there to support and record the issues and the outcome from a perspective that reflected the concerns of the inner-city community..."

Rev. Lewis Stewart, United Church Ministry

COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS:

To alter the reality of "57 Channels and Nothing On," TV DINNER holds video training workshops for community groups. Why listen to the corporate media when we can listen to each other?

"We strongly recommend this program to other agencies."

J. Roberto Burgos, Puerto Rican Youth And Development

"The video training workshop gave us a new and creative tool for training farmworkers in other skills, educating them on their rights and workplace safety, documenting abuse..."

Lisa Reagan, Farmworker Legal Services

COMMUNITYBRUNCHES:

If you don't get cable, you can catch our program at one of our Sunday brunches. Come for a show and a bagel, and discussion with members of the concerned Rochester community.

"Alternative news media town meeting, and party all rolled into one. A great way to think globally, and act locally"

Kay Jordan, Community Activist

"Bagels and coffee; interesting and sensitive video; stimulating, democratic discussion... a quality brunch"

bobby johnson, Clarissa Street poet

FILM SERIES:

There's more to life than "Robocop 3." We hold public screenings of independent films including *To Sleep with Anger*; *Attica*; *Manufacturing Consen*; *Noam Chomsky and the Media*, and *Damned in the USA*.

"The stimulating discussions that follow the film add a new dimension to movie-going, and the popcorn's not bad either."

Vicki Lewin, Mediation Center of Rochester

MEDIA ADVOCACY:

TV DINNER played a key role in the coalition that saved public access television in Rochester. Our coalition insisted on public hearings and pushed for the creation of Rochester Community TV (RCTV Cable Channel 15). Public access is now out of the hands of Time-Warner, Inc., and in the hands of a local community board.

GET INVOLVED:

Give us a call at 288-1492, and find out how *you* can get involved in community television. TV DINNER meets every week -- new faces and ideas are always welcome.

Free training and equipment access are also available at RCTV. Call Executive Director Cecil Felton at 325-1238 for more details.

Freedom of the press belongs to those who own it!!